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The Institution of Engineers, Australia: Sydney Division
Engineering Heritage Committee
ORAL HISTORY PROGRAM

INTERVIEWEE: **Ian McCREERY**

TAPE NUMBERS: **IEA SYD: FH18,
FH19 & FH20**

INTERVIEWER: **Frank HEIMANS**

DATE: **13 April 1999**

NUMBER OF TAPES: **3**

RESTRICTIONS ON USE: **Nil.**

LOG PREPARATION: **This log was prepared using a Sony TCM-5000 EV cassette recorder**

INTERVIEW TAPE LOG

Tape: IEA SYD: FH18, Side A.

TAPE COUNTER	SUBJECT	NAMES & KEYWORDS
000	Start of Tape IEA SYD:FH18 Side A	
006	Gives date & place of birth (Born in 1925 at South Perth, WA). Gives details of his mother and father and paternal grandfather, who became the first Minister at the Congregational Church in Claremont, Perth. His parents were very early settlers in Bunbury, WA	South Perth Claremont Perth Bunbury WA
50	Describes how his father was a bank manager with the Commonwealth Bank who lost his job during the Great Depression, which resulted in his parents', marriage breaking up and the departure of his father to Kalgoorlie. Mentions that he never ever saw his father again from the age of 7 and that his mother brought him up solely under very difficult circumstances.	Commonwealth Bank Great Depression Kalgoorlie. WA

60	Recalls that he was reasonably good at Mathematics at North Perth State School and that he became a member of the Church of England and was a choirboy.	North Perth State School
70	Speculates on what his father might have done after leaving his mother and whether he ever came back to Perth. Mentions that his brother saw his father once in Perth.	
84	Comments that he received a scholarship to finish his secondary education at Wesley College, where the Headmaster took an interest in him.	Dr Rossiter, Headmaster of Wesley College, South Perth.
105	Declares that he combined schooling of the last two years at Wesley College into one year and received a Distinction in Chemistry and Mathematics.	
137	Describes his admiration for Dr Rossiter.	
150	Recounts that he got his first job as an office boy with the Victoria Insurance Company and describes the work he did there.	Victoria Insurance Company
176	Applied with the West Australian Government Railways as a Civil Engineering Cadet and was successful. Says that his interest in Engineering was purely accidental.	WA Government Railways
200	States that he was moved to Northam in 1942 after one year with the WAGR in Perth and describes the tasks that he performed there, such as pegging out railway lines and drafting and surveying. Mentions that his pay was £112 per year.	Northam, WA WAGR (West Australian Government Railways)
313	Mentions that the war was on but that the effects of the war were not really felt in Northam, apart from the fact that there was a military camp there.	

330	Discusses that he was successful in obtaining a scholarship under the Commonwealth Assistance Scheme in 1943 to the University of Western Australia to study Engineering whilst he continued working for the WAGR during the university holidays. Talks about having joined the Engineers Club and becoming its Secretary. Also became a member of the University Students Guild (today's University Union) where he met his future wife in 1944. He also became its Treasurer.	Commonwealth Assistance Scheme University of WA UWA (University of WA) Students Guild Jill Bertwistle
425	End of tape IEA SYD: FH 18 Side A	

Tape: IEA SYD: FH18, Side B.

004	Mentions his sporting activities at UWA in the Rugby team. Elaborates on meeting his future wife, a new student at UWA ("fresher").	"Fresher"
038	Recalls how, after graduating from UWA in 1947, he saw an advertisement for the Shell Oil Company who wanted engineers in Borneo. He applied and was successful in obtaining the position. Reports that his future wife got herself a job in Melbourne as the first female scientific officer ever appointed by the Bureau of Geology, Geophysics, and Mineral Resources.	Shell Oil Company Borneo Bureau of Geology, Geophysics, and Mineral Resources
052	Describes the living conditions in Borneo and how, when he suggested that the Shell Company bring his wife Jill up to Brunei, he had to get permission from Shell HQ in The Hague and had to guarantee to pay back her fare in case they did not marry. Talks about his marriage to Jill in Miri, Sarawak, by an Anglican Minister who happened to be an ethnic Chinese.	The Hague, Netherlands Borneo Rev. Chin Pu Yin, Anglican Minister Miri, Sarawak
080	Describes the workforce at Brunei and his job in Brunei, building roads and oil tanks.	

115	Mentions that later, the Shell Oil Company lost ownership of the oilfields when the Sultan of Brunei took it over.	Sultan of Brunei
126	Describes how he and his wife lived in Brunei and the leisure activities they enjoyed, such as golf dancing and trips they used to take.	
181	Confirms that at the end of his two-year contract, he decided not to renew and returned to Australia, obtaining a job at the State Electricity Commission of Victoria.	SECV
200	Talks about his first job with SECV in 1949 as Manager of the Newport Power Station site, extending the turbine house and overseeing the construction of a new coal-loading facility.	Newport Power Station
236	Mentions that he was transferred to the KIEWA HydroElectric Scheme, becoming 2I/C of the construction of the Rocky Valley Dam, a large earth-filled dam project. Worked on the Diversion Tunnel and describes the equipment used.	KIEWA Hydro-Electric Scheme Rocky Valley Dam
298	Describes some of the people he worked with and the length of the tunnel (about 50 metres). Says that he was learning from the Foreman and others involved with the project.	Len Evatt, Tunnelling Engineer
347	States that the KIEWA Dam Project was about 3-4 hours driving time, northeast of Melbourne.	
371	End of Tape IEA:SYD FH18 Side B	

Tape: IEA SYD: FH19, Side A.

002	Start of Tape IEA:FH19 Side A	
004	Mentions that after his work on the KIEWA Dam Project, he was transferred back to SECV Melbourne HO where he was not assigned to work of any significance and began looking for another job. Was offered jobs by McDougall & Ireland and by John Holland Constructions and took the John Holland job. Describes John Holland as a person of integrity	McDougall & Ireland John Holland Constructions
030	Details his first job at John Holland Constructions in 1954 as manager of the construction of a coal-fired power station for APM at Fairfield, Melbourne. Describes his first years with John Holland Constructions on this project.	APM (Australian Paper Manufacturers). Fairfield, Melbourne Bill Harker, Chief Engineer. John West, John Holland Constructions Engineer
107	Discusses some innovations that came into the construction industry, including off-site concrete mixing during the 1950s.	Off-site concrete mixing
132	Emphasises that the 1950s were a time of industrial unrest and recounts an altercation with a member of the BLF who threatened industrial action if certain concrete workers were not made members of the union.	Industrial unrest BLF (Builders Labourers Federation)
177	Describes John Holland Constructions as it was then - a small company based only in Victoria. Recounts that he was put on three months' probation as a Project Manager and that after he had proved himself, he was put on a salary of £1500 per year.	

220	Talks about some of the innovations in construction that arose in the 1950s, such as the use of pre-stressed concrete and especially pre-stressed concrete piles. Thinks that on a job in Hobart, it was the first time that pre-stressed concrete piles were used in Australia.	Jeoff Cook, Bridge Engineer for John Holland Constructions. Sorell Bridge, Hobart Tas.
247	Recounts problems with the job in Hobart on the Sorell Bridge when the piles were breaking because they had not been compressed or pre-tensioned enough.	
280	Became Construction Manager, Victoria for John Holland Constructions in 1957.	
306	Mentions that John Holland decided to send him on a study tour overseas for 3 months and that on his return, he was to head up a new Sydney Branch for the company. Details his trip overseas for he and his wife, travelling through Europe, US and Japan. Recalls that he saw new methods and equipment in steam pile driving and tunnelling.	
369	Comments on his role as first Branch Manager for John Holland Constructions in NSW in 1960 and talks about some of the early construction projects that the company was involved in.	Ted Moore Silverwater Bridge
410	End of Tape IEA SYD:FH19 Side A	

Tape: IEA SYD: FH19, Side B.

002	Start of Tape IEA SYD:FH19 Side B	
006	Gives reasons for John Holland setting up a NSW Branch and describes the Silverwater Bridge Project.	
037	<p>Recounts the story of the collapse of the West Gate Bridge in Melbourne having been in Melbourne on the day it happened. Describes the devastation, loss of life (33 killed) and the relief effort that was set in motion. Is very emotional as he tells the story of the disaster. Gives the reasons for the bridge collapse (faulty design) and gives hints of early indications that the design may not have been up to standard. Talks about how he was alerted to the faulty design before the bridge collapse and how he warned John Holland about it. Holland then obtained a certificate to the effect that the designers felt that the design was adequate, but the subsequent Royal Commission that was set up after the bridge collapse determined otherwise.</p>	<p>West Gate Bridge collapse</p> <p>Trevor Nixon, Project Manager</p> <p>Maunsell & Partners, bridge design company.</p> <p>Miles Burkett from English firm of bridge designers).</p> <p>Brian Barmby, John Holland's Chief Design Engineer</p>
132	Was fearful that after the bridge collapse, no one in Australia would ever ask John Holland Constructions to build another bridge, but maintains that the company had built up such a high reputation that they managed to obtain other work, including the construction of the Roseville Bridge in Sydney. Thinks it was remarkable that it turned out that way.	Roseville Bridge
160	Maintains that more work went to the NSW Branch of John Holland Constructions than to the other states and expanded the company's operations into Western Australia, Northern Territory and Queensland. Became Manager of the Northern Region of John Holland Constructions, which included NSW, Queensland, NT and Western Australia.	

182	Announces that responsibility over such a large area involved him in much travel and recalls how his son one day told him that he regretted his father's absence from home when he was growing up. Thinks that his family may have suffered to some extent because of this.	
210	Mentions that he was made Managing Director, International in 1972 with responsibility to expand the company overseas and was made a board member.	Indonesia Papua New Guinea Thailand Malaysia
230	Describes a project in Indonesia: an offshore cooling plant construction project and some other overseas projects in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, built by the company after he left. Mentions Leighton as the other Australian company who was operating in SE Asia.	Bontang, East Kalimantan Province, Indonesia
343	Gives reasons for his departure from John Holland Constructions and the beginning of a new career in 1980 in Arbitration and Mediation, which lasted until 1997.	Jim Antill, Arbitration Specialist
440	End of Tape IEA SYD: FH19 Side B	

Tape: IEA SYD: FH20, Side A.

001	Continuation of interview with Ian McCreery	
009	Recalls how he found local partners for joint ventures in Indonesia. Mentions a particular local partnership between an engineer and an architect and invited them to join John Holland in a local joint venture partnership. Tendered for and obtained several contracts in Indonesia. Maintains that everything was going well until one of the Indonesians, Ibnu Sutowo of Pertamina was put under house arrest by the Indonesian authorities. That put the brake on the company's operations in Indonesia.	P.T. John Holland Constructions Indonesia Ibnu Sutowo, Pertamina. Bechtel

068	<p>Speculates that Sutowo was arrested because he had become too greedy in the amount that he was 'raking off' in commissions and that he fell out with President Soeharto over this.</p> <p>Reveals that legal and illegal commissions and corruption were a part of life in Indonesia and recognised that contributions to certain individuals had to be made from time to time.</p> <p>Reveals that he himself took part in that practice, but only after they had secured the contracts. Admits that he felt very uncomfortable about doing it and that one could not obtain any contracts in Indonesia unless one played that game. Reveals that he told his wife about it and also informed the board of John Holland Constructions that this practice was being carried out.</p>	Pres. Soeharto
119	<p>Talks about his retirement from active employment with John Holland Constructions in 1980 and the reunion of former and present John Holland Constructions employees, which will occur in May 1999 in Melbourne.</p>	
154	<p>Talks about the founding of John Holland Constructions from partnership, to private company, to public company and gives a brief history of the company until his resignation in 1990.</p>	<p>Stafford Fox</p> <p>Pennant Holdings.</p> <p>Brian Johnson former Man Director of John Holland Constructions NB ** could be construed as defamatory comments</p> <p>Denis Cordner former Chairman of John Holland Constructions.</p> <p>Janet Holmes a Court</p>

201	Says that he's enjoyed his time at John Holland Constructions and is grateful of having had the opportunity to have been a part of the firm. Thinks that he's been lucky enough to have been able to seize opportunities as they arose.	
257	Mentions his four children- Janet, the eldest daughter with three children; Stewart, also an Engineer who presently works for SOCOG, another son who is a doctor at Bathurst and Susan, a younger daughter, aged 40 who has just had a child. He now has eight grandchildren.	
287	Thinks that the greatest advances in his profession have been in the area of bridge and wharf construction and feels that John Holland Constructions has been able to make a contribution in the field of bridge design and construction. Feels that he personally played a minor role in that achievement.	
320	Doesn't believe that he lost a lot of opportunities and states that he has been lucky in making the right decisions at the right time.	
345	Is optimistic about Australia's future but is apprehensive about the increased crime rate and drug use. Thinks that it was a safer world when he grew up.	
370	Is concerned about the world's use of finite resources, such as gas and oil.	George Fox
405	End of Tape IEA SYD:FH20 Side A and end of interview with Ian McCreery. NB: Tape IEA SYD: FH 20 Side B not recorded.	